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ABSTRACT

A brief teacher's guide supplements a videotape of two 15-minute segments on homelessness. The stated objective of the video is to cover the issues of homelessness as they exist today and to dispel the stereotypes of homelessness leftover from earlier eras. A family which has found itself homeless is introduced and then aspects of the phenomenon of homelessness are examined. The demographics of the homeless population are reviewed briefly: single adults; families; battered women; and runaway youth. The multiple causes of homelessness are discussed: lack of affordable housing; deinstitutionalization; divorce/abandonment; unemployment; substance abuse; natural catastrophe; physical abuse; and eviction. The conditions faced by the homeless are mentioned: weather; violence; medical problems; poor diet; shelters for adults, battered women, families, and adolescents; and doubled-up homelessness. The objectives of the program for students are listed in the teacher's guide: (1) all types of people can find themselves homeless; (2) families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population; (3) homelessness has both societal and personal causes; (4) shelters are an emergency response to homelessness, not a solution; and (5) homeless people live in a variety of settings, but one commonality is the lack of a fixed, adequate, and permanent residence. Discussion questions and activities are listed. (ABL)

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FACES OF HOMELESSNESS

A Teacher's Guide

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"Faces of Homelessness"...

is a companion resource to the Department of Education curriculum on the subject. Its purpose is two-fold:

1. to describe the different populations of homeless people and the problems and conditions they face;
2. to provide numerous personal interviews with adults, youths, and children so students can "meet" people who have experienced homelessness.

The primary objective is to cover the issues of homelessness as they exist today, and to dispel the stereotypes leftover from earlier eras. Homeless people in this program are portrayed as people not very different from people students might know, or from the students themselves. Homelessness is not simply a statistical phenomenon, but a human one.

It is recommended that, for students, this video be shown in two 15-minute segments due to the amount of material covered in the film.

Synopsis

A family which has found itself homeless is introduced, and then aspects of the phenomeon of homelessness are examined.

The demographics of this population are reviewed briefly:

Single Adults
Families
Battered Women
Runaway Youth

The multiple causes of homelessness are discussed:

Lack of Affordable Housing
Deinstitutionalization
Divorce/abandonment
Unemployment
Substance Abuse
Natural Catastrophe
Physical Abuse
Eviction

The conditions faced by the homeless are mentioned:

Weather
Violence
Medical Problems
Poor Diet
Shelters for adults, battered women, families, adolescents
Doubled-up Homelessness

Objectives: After viewing this program,students ought to be able to recognize that:

1. All types of people can find themselves homeless, not simply middle-aged alcoholic men.
2. Families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.
3. Homelessness has both societal and personal causes.
4. Shelters are an emergency response to homelessness, not a solution.
5. Homeless people live in a variety of settings (i.e. adult shelter, family shelter, the street, etc.), but the one commonality is the lack of a fixed, adequate, and permanent residence.

Preparation:

Teachers are encouraged to integrate this video into a variety of disciplines, including social studies, math/economics, civics, history, and language arts. It can also be used for school-wide activities.

1. What kinds of people become homeless?
2. Can a child be homeless?
3. Should a person be blamed for being homeless?
4. What are some reasons a person might become homeless?
5. What percentage of homeless people take drugs?
6. Where do homeless people stay?

Discussion:

1. What are some societal causes of homelessness?
2. What are some personal causes?
3. Can people who are working become homeless?
4. Why was the grandmother being evicted for taking in her daughter? What would you do in her place?
5. Rich's school mates abused him and called him "Shelter boy." How would you react to a homeless student in your class?
6. Does the government have any obligation to help homeless people?
7. Is it better to build more houses or more shelters?
8. What is your reaction to a homeless person who asks you for money on the street?

Activities:

1. The video listed two agencies in Massachusetts which help homeless people. Invite a speaker from a local shelter or Department of Public Welfare to discuss problems of homelessness in your community.

2. Find out if there are homeless shelters or motels in your town. Contact them to see how your class or school can support the people living there.

2. The video listed numerous causes of homelessness. Clip articles from newspapers about incidents which may lead to homelessness.

3. Take a poll of other students or staff. How would they describe a typical homeless person? See how their responses compare with the information presented in the video.

The contents of this video were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S.D.E., and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.